

Omoide No Shotokyo by Sheila Levrant de Bretteville

Conservation Treatment Performed January 3 – January 21, 2011
and Instructions for Ongoing Maintenance



View after treatment

Prepared for the
Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Los Angeles
Los Angeles, CA

Prepared by
Rosa Lowinger & Associates
Conservation of Art + Architecture
Los Angeles / Miami
February 1, 2011

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The sculpture titled *Omoide No Shotokyo* (Remembering Old Little Tokyo) by noted artist Sheila Levrant de Bretteville begins at the old Union Church on San Pedro (Judge John Aiso Way), and runs the length of First Avenue, and up to the northern 1000' property line of the Japanese American National Museum on Central. Installed in 1996, the sidewalk was designed to celebrate the last intact historic block of the original Little Tokyo. The piece is made of cast concrete sidewalk with brass and stainless steel lettering and outlines of images.

Over the course of 15 years, the sculpture has sustained much foot traffic, graffiti, staining from greasing of fire escapes, chewing gum deposits, and various general spills. The business owners have randomly carried out basic cleaning over the years, but the level of consistency varied based on the business owners' involvement and time commitment. It was noted that some areas looked to have been over-cleaned by businesses while some were under-cleaned. A couple of the businesses located on 1st Ave distribute gum at the end of meals that has lead to an excessive amount of gum accretions on the surface of the artwork. It was also noted that no trashcans are available on either side of that block of 1st Avenue. In the past, repairs to cracks and losses have generally gone untreated.

The present conservation sequence, carried out by Rosa Lowinger & Associates, from January 3 – 21, 2011, was intended as a restoration and continuation of the artist's original intent. The sequence followed the artist's understanding that there would be normal wear that would occur to the piece over time as a natural result of the nature of being a sidewalk that receives heavy foot traffic daily.

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2. PRESENT ARTWORK DETAILS

Artist: Sheila Levrant de Bretteville
Title: *Omoide No Shotokyo* (Remembering Old Little Tokyo)
Date: 1996
Materials: Cast concrete, metal (brass, stainless steel)
Location: Beginning at the old Union Church on San Pedro (Judge John Aiso Way), running the length of First Avenue, and up to the northern 1000' property line of the Japanese American National Museum on Central Avenue.

3. TEAM MEMBERS

Client: Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Los Angeles
354 South Spring Street
Los Angeles CA 90013

Susan Gray, Cultural Arts Planner
Lauren Davis, Public Art Conservation Associate, Cultural Arts

Conservator: Rosa Lowinger & Associates
Conservation of Art + Architecture
1142 S Stanley Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90019

Rosa Lowinger, Senior Conservator
Amy Green, (Silverlake Conservation) Conservator
Alison Tissue, Studio Manager & Senior Technician
Benjamin Brandfon, Technician
Tom Kopache, Technician

4. TREATMENT PERFORMED

January 3 – 21, 2011

1. The installation/artwork was documented before, during, and after treatment with digital photographs. A CD with a full set of said photographs accompanies this report.
2. A power washer set to pressurize at ca. 500 p.s.i. was used to clean and remove dirt, grime and gum from the surface of the sidewalk, along with removing buildup within the losses and cracks to be treated. The power washer was used over the entire surface using a 25-degree spread. On the white/cream band, the tip of the nozzle was kept at least 8" from the surface of the concrete. Power washing was very time consuming and required meticulous attention to detail. Certain areas were power washed two or three times.
3. Stubborn accretions and gum were removed using blades at a low angle and/or Jasco Premium Paint & Epoxy Remover. All Jasco was cleaned thoroughly off with Proctor and Gamble Orvus WA Paste, a conservation grade detergent, and water.
4. Additional stain removal was done with Orvus and synthetic bristle brushes, followed by power washing.
5. The brass inserts were cleaned with ethanol, naptha, water and a proprietary conservation grade polishing agent.
6. Losses and cracks with a depth and width greater than ¼" were filled with Edison Custom 45 mortar, a cement based patching compound, tinted with Cathedral Stone earth pigments to match the color and texture of the surrounding concrete. Losses and cracks with less than ¼" depth and width were filled with Edison Custom 55 mortar, latex-modified reprofiling mortar, tinted with Cathedral Stone earth pigments to match the color and texture of the surrounding concrete. All fills were sanded with 100 or 220 grit sandpaper to match the surface of the fill with the surrounding surface. Fills were then wiped with acetone.
7. The artwork was photographed after completion of treatment.

NOTE: On or around January 19th, after the cleaning had been completed and the piece photographed, an oily black substance was observed dripping from an overhead fire escape. The people who applied the lubricant had laid down squares of paper to help keep it off the sidewalk, but people walking on the sidewalk must have walked over the drips trailing the substance out for 15 – 20 feet in either direction from the original spot. This dark oily stain could be reduced with power washing and/ or cleaning with acetone. The work would require the labor of two technicians for one to two days. This would be an additional cost outside of this current project.

5. MAINTENANCE RECOMMENDATIONS

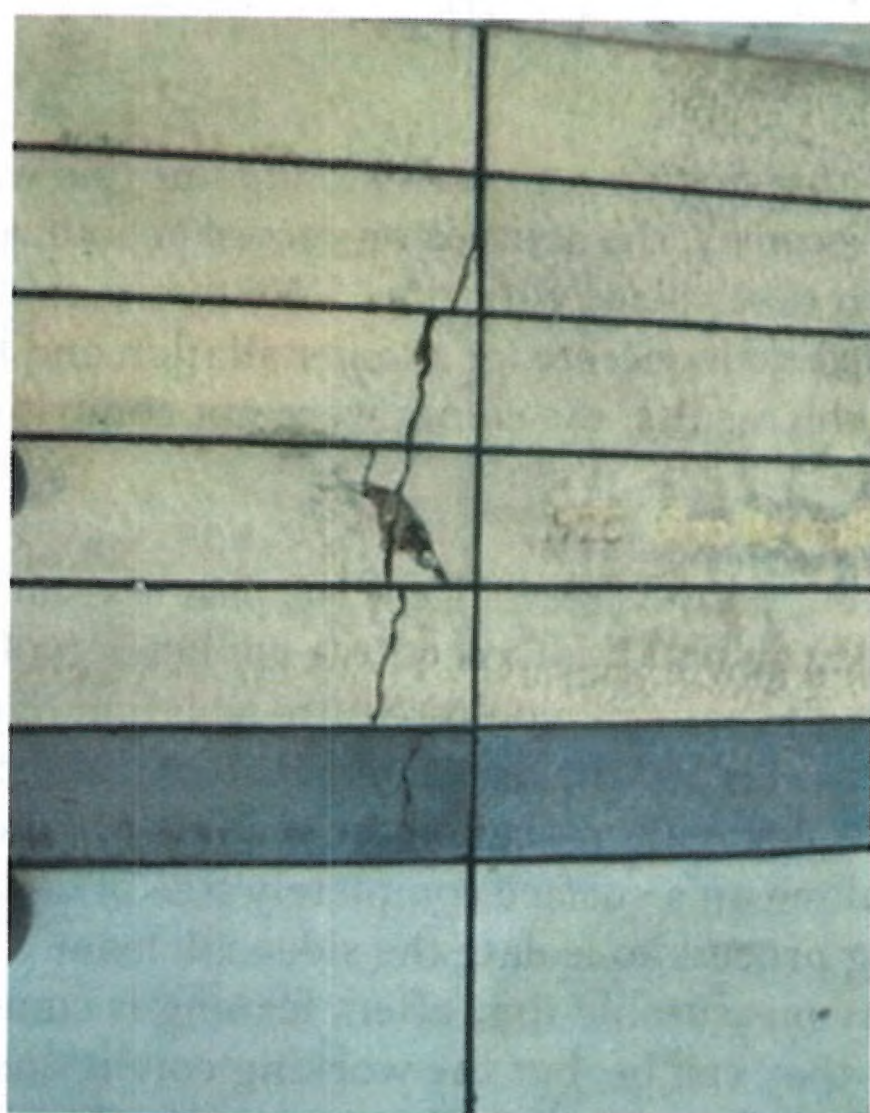
Like all works of art set in exterior settings, *Omoide No Shotokyo* should receive regular maintenance to preserve and maintain the surface and structural integrity of the piece over time. Due to the piece's location in a high traffic area, this would ideally be carried out on a regular basis by local merchants for their area of sidewalk. Maintenance would consist of rinsing the sidewalk on a weekly basis and washing the sidewalk on a monthly basis with Orvus WA Paste conservation grade detergent using a pressurized garden hose nozzle to spray water. Gum can be removed by use of mechanical scraping tools at a low angle, or by power washing. We strongly recommend encouraging the restaurant owners to refrain from giving out free gum to patrons. Much of this gum finds its way onto the sidewalk.

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7. SELECTION OF IMAGES



Lettering before & after cleaning/polishing.



Fill at 112 Judge John Aiso Way, before and after filling of losses.

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8. LETTER ADDRESSING COATING OF ARTWORK

ROSA LOWINGER & ASSOCIATES CONSERVATION OF SCULPTURE + ARCHITECTURE

January 10, 2011

Cultural Arts Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Los Angeles
1200 W 7th Street | 5th Floor
Los Angeles CA 90017
T 213.977.1749 | F 213.9613.5063

Dear Susan and Lauren,

This letter intends to address your questions regarding the use of a water repellant or sacrificial coating for the Little Tokyo sidewalk. As indicated in our original proposal, we stated that: "Testing will be done to determine if there is a way to restore or resaturate the original concrete staining. Coating tests will also be performed to address the possibility of a protective coating for the concrete."

This means that the use of concrete stains and coatings is optional for this project and subject to our determination of their efficacy and to determine whether the appearance and finish was desirable.

With respect to the color resaturation: We determined that from a materials standpoint this was theoretically possible. However, as we have all learned recently, the artist is on record as indicating that she prefers the weathered softening of the color that takes place with time. We tested colors provided by the company, L. M. Scofield. Scofield stained the concrete for the installation and have a product for revitalizing their colors but we did not like the results; the colors were not compatible and did not improve or enhance the look of the concrete.

With respect to the application of coatings: After working on the sidewalk for the past several weeks, and researching the possibility of coatings, we also do not recommend the application of a coating for numerous reasons. Above all is the fact that all coatings would require isolation of the sidewalk for at least 36 hours. Twenty four of those hours are for the dry time of the coating itself. Prior to its application, the sidewalk would need to be isolated after cleaning until it is dry (another 6-12 hours) because application of the coating must be done on a surface completely free of oil, grease and dirt. We have found it difficult during the cleaning process to isolate the sidewalk from pedestrian traffic while we are cleaning, let alone for any measurable time after cleaning is completed. The local merchants are cooperative to the extent that they can be; but the working conditions have been very difficult. To apply the coating to the sidewalk without having the appropriate cleanliness and cure times would invariably compromise the coating. There is a good chance it will dry unevenly under these conditions or peel within a short period of time because of trapped dirt and moisture. We cannot recommend this from a preservation perspective and could definitely not guarantee the results of its application.

In preparing for this project, we spent a great deal of time looking at coatings and frankly found most of them to be inappropriate for this piece. First of all, any coating that produces a gloss or semi-gloss surface is not appropriate because it is not part of the original aesthetic intent of the piece. This eliminates most of the Prosoco concrete coatings, including the acrylic-siloxane Single Step® and others that are rated for horizontal surfaces. The wax based anti-graffiti coatings (SC-1® for example) are not intended for horizontal surfaces. The non-gloss producing silanes, such as H100® and SL-100® require the most scrupulously dessicated and clean surface-- something which we cannot provide because we cannot isolate the sidewalk from foot traffic. Lastly, there are

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questions about the efficacy of applying these coatings to metallic surfaces such as the letters embedded in the sidewalk. Most of these materials would leave a cloudy film on the surface of the cleaned letters, therefore rendering them unsightly.

The treatment of this sidewalk has been logistically problematic all along. Because of the constant need to stop and start to accommodate the local businesses, the cleaning and patching have taken more than 3x our initial projection. We are willing to absorb this time. However, trying to apply a sacrificial coating under these conditions would certainly result in a sub-standard treatment. We cannot recommend this. Moreover, we do not feel it is necessary. Concrete is a very resilient material and its long-term cleanliness can be achieved, instead, with appropriate maintenance. We recommend that instead of applying a sacrificial coating, we provide maintenance instructions to the local merchants that can be followed on a regular basis.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with additional questions.

Sincerely Yours,

Rosa Lowinger

Amy Green

CREATIVE CONSILIENCE of Computing and the Arts

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Computer Science
at Yale

The Arts at Yale

Sheila Levrant de Bretteville

Professor and Director of Undergraduate Studies (Graphic Design), Yale School of Art

B.A. (Art History), Barnard College, 1962

M.F.A., Yale University, 1964

Joined Yale Faculty: 1990

[Personal Homepage](#)

Office Location: 1156 Chapel St.

Telephone: (203) 432-2622

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She was designated "Design Legend" by the American Institute of Graphic Arts in 2006. Her numerous publications on art and culture include *The Photographs of Dorothy Norman* and *The Motown Album*, as well as public works: *Biddy Mason: Time and Place* and *Omoide no Shotokyo* in Los Angeles; *Search: Literature in Flushing, New York*; *At the start/At long last* in New York City's Inwood "A" train station; *Path of Stars* in New Haven; *step(pe)* in Yekaterinburg, Russia. Her work in books, magazines, and newspapers includes the redesign of the *Los Angeles Times*, special issues *Aspen Times*, *Everywoman*, *American Cinematographer*, and *Arts in Society*.

posters and fine press editions are in the special collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, Centre Pompidou in Paris and numerous university and public libraries. In 1971, at the California Institute of the Arts, she created the first women's design program and, in 1973, founded the Women's Building and its Women's Graphic Center in Los Angeles. In 1981 she initiated and chaired the Department of Communication Design at Otis/Parsons.

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